1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

EAR ORNAMENTS.—Formerly the ear lobes of both sexes were pierced for the reception of ear plugs (see under Deformation of body) and pendants were worn at festivals. Nowadays silver crescentic earrings (M.: *kyama-lula, kyama-dusa, kul-dusa, kaprik;* S.: *tapana*) and finger rings (M.: *mat-dikka, mikta-dikka;* S.: *tinana*) are very common. These articles are either bought from foreign traders or from traveling Ladino goldsmiths.

HAIR.—The men cut their hair short, but occasionally the elder Miskito leave a lock of hair just back of the crown. About the middle of the nineteenth century the Sumu men wore their hair long and tied it in a queue (Bell, b: 158; Collinson, b: 149–150), but now they have it cut fairly short in a straight line just above the eyebrows and as far back as the temples. The women of both tribes cut their hair off just above the eyelashes in order to prevent it from hanging over the face, but on the sides and back it is allowed to hang down freely. Upon the death of a relative they cut it off short and lay it in the grave with the deceased, a practice which formerly was also current among the men at the death of their wives.

At the settlement of Cariay, which probably existed in Costa Rica and not on the Mosquito Coast, as many believe, the women wore their hair cut short in 1502. The men, on the other hand, had it long; the fringe was cut moderately short, while the remainder of the hair was allowed to grow long and was bound up with fillets round the head in braids and rolls.

Both sexes devote much attention to their hair and they anoint it frequently in order to render it softer and easier to handle. Their favorite hair oil, known by the Miskito name *kaiwas*, is obtained from the seeds of the oil palm (*Elaeis melanococca*). The Sumu also extract the oil from the seeds of various other trees, as the saba (*Guarea caudata* or *Carapa guianensis*), the "aboo" (*Cnemareuma oleifera*), the "yari" and the small huiscoyol palm (*Bactris horrida* Oerst.); they also buy *kaiwas* from their neighbors. Nowadays these hair oils are mixed with foreign hair tonics, perfumes, and vaselines, but in former days the Indians added the aromatic rootstock or fruits of certain indigenous plants. Flowers and ribbons are also tied or stuck in the hair by the females.

A crude native comb was formerly made by tying together a number of small sticks which tapered to a point at each end. Now only foreign-made combs are seen. Among the Miskito the latter are known by the English word *kum*, whereas the Sumu have native names (T.: *kas-kus;* P., U.: *kas-kalas*). Exquemelin (Fr. ed.: II, 268–269) states that the Miskito wife used to comb her husband's hair every morning before the latter went out hunting and fishing.

DEPILATION.—Although the Indians take much pride in an abundant growth of hair on the head, they would formerly not allow any

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

231 439 According to Belt (204) the Sumu living on the upper Rio Grande used to come periodically to the Spanish settlements in order to obtain dogs. They would barter a gun or a large iron pot for a single dog, if it was of the right color. Some Ladinos around Olama had even in those days commenced to rear dogs to supply the demand. These Indians had a special liking for black ones, and did not value those of any other color so much. Lehmann (c: I, 405) states that [764] the Miskito formerly buried a red dog (*pelun*) with a dead person, in order to serve the latter on his voyage to the underworld. However, the writer has never observed that either Sumu or Miskito have a preference for a certain color.

231 There is no record of the former existence on the Mosquito Coast of the "xulo" (xolotl) or barkless dog, which was tamed in the Pacific region of Nicaragua at the time of the conquest. The native names of the common dog (M.: *yul;* S.: *sul, sulu, solo*) bear a close affinity to that Nahuatl word. Allen has identified the barkless dog in question with the raccoon, which is, however, called *sukuk* by both Miskito and Sumu.

AGRICULTURE

241 Agriculture is not as highly developed on the Mosquito Coast as in the remainder of Honduras and Nicaragua; it furnishes, nevertheless, the principal means of subsistence.

PREPARING THE PLANTATION.—In order to make their plantation (M.: *inala;* S.: *yamak*) the Indians cut down a patch of the forest, generally on the bank of a navigable stream. The rough work, that is the felling of the trees and the clearing of the ground, is essentially man's work. The large hardwood trees are usually left standing, but all the other giants of the forest are cut down. This work takes place at the beginning of the dry season, about February or March. Toward the beginning of May fire is set to the tangled mass. When the ground has thus been prepared by the men, the women take charge of the future plantation, the planting and cutting down of the grass and weeds being their occupation. Sometimes the man and wife do the planting together. The harvesting is the work of the females.

The ax, machete, and "barreta" or pointed digging stick are the only agricultural implements. The great heat and moisture with the comparatively uniform temperature all the year round enable a constant succession of vegetation, and trees may bear fruit at all seasons. The soil is in general very fertile, but large areas of the country are covered with savannas with sandy and gravelly soil, which is entirely unfit for cultivation and produces only scanty grass, pines, oaks, and various species of scrubby plants. The Indians from this part of the country are therefore compelled to make their planta-

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

The men never shed any tears at the death of their near relations, but they will break out in low lamentations. Upon the death of his wife the Miskito Indian will exclaim as follows: Why did you leave me? Who is going to cook my food now? Who is going to wash my clothes now? Who is going to raise your children? How unfortunate am I! I shall never be happy again! Your children are always asking for you!

This manner of mourning is a common occurrence at the Miskito villages. It is also practiced by the Indians in the Gran Chaco and the Guianas. The Sumu women will also chant eulogiums upon the deceased, but they manifest their sorrow in a much quieter manner.

BURIAL CUSTOMS

Burial by simple inhumation is the present practice. The Miskito dress the deceased in his best clothes and place him in a canoe cut crosswise in two parts, one half of it serving as cover. The Sumu simply wrap the body in bark cloth, as did the Miskito in former days, according to Sloane (b: 279) and Jefferys (46). These authors state that the Miskito sewed the dead in a mat, and did not lay the body in the grave lengthwise, but placed it upright on the feet, with the face directly to the east. Nowadays, however, among both tribes the dead person is laid lengthwise on its back to a depth of 4 or 5 feet.

MISKITO BURIAL CUSTOMS.—The burial ground is generally a short distance from the village. While the corpse is being carried thereto the female relatives renew the mourning and try to injure themselves, but they are watched by the others and are not allowed to harm themselves seriously. Livestock is kept away from the burial ground, as the spirit of the deceased is liable to enter it and cause it to die.

Formerly all the personal property of the deceased, as his tools, ornaments, dogs, etc., were put in the grave, in order to assure him a livelihood in the other world. Division of labor continues in the other life, and archeological investigations from various parts of America have shown that spindle whorls are never found in the same graves as stone celts. The hair of the female relatives is also joined to the corpse. A pine-wood torch is also added in order to guide the latter during his long journey to the hereafter. A small canoe is put in the grave, for the voyage to the underworld has to be effected partly on water, and that country is surrounded by a river which has to be crossed with the aid of a dog. For that reason a dog was also killed at each burial. Nowadays all articles put in the grave are broken so as to prevent the stealing of them, but generally only the useless property of the deceased is buried with him, while the remainder is kept by his family. Formerly even his livestock had to be killed, and the plantations and fruit trees destroyed, so that the living should

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

764 not "rob the dead," thus causing the latter's spirit to linger about doing all sorts of mischief. The property of a deceased is known by the name *platira* (M.) and *lawan, luwani* (S.).

According to Exquemelin (French ed.: II, 275) the Miskito also formerly killed the slaves and servants at the death of a chief, in order to serve their master in the other world, a custom found in ancient America among the civilized tribes from Mexico to Peru. Even his priest (*sukya?*) was put to death to be at his service in the hereafter. This author goes on to say that at such an occasion the Miskito had the intention of sacrificing a Portuguese slave who had lost an eye by an arrow shot. But the latter persuaded the Indians that only men without any physical defect would be allowed in the future world and that, besides, they were not paying due respect to the deceased by giving him as servant a one-eyed man when there were so many with two eyes who could be used for this purpose. To this the Miskito agreed and the Portuguese's life was spared.

A small hut is erected over the grave, whereto the women repair every day in order to light a fire and prepare food and drink for the deceased. These viands are renewed every day, and are supposed to be consumed by the spirit or soul (*iaiāni*) of the dead person. In former days the quality of such food was apparently far superior to that found nowadays on the graves, for Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 254) makes the following statement: "I have oftentimes with my own hands taken away these offerings and eaten them instead of other victuals. To this I was moved, because I knew that the fruits used on these occasions were the choicest and ripest of all others, as also the liquors of the best sort they made use of for their greatest regale and pleasure."

765 Secondary burials appear to have been practiced formerly by the Miskito. According to Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 254; French ed.: II, 274) the widow opened the grave [a] of her husband about one year after burial. Owing to the great humidity the body would soon decompose. She scraped and washed the bones and dried them in the sun. Then she placed them in a *cubala*,[b] a certain pouch or satchel, which she had to carry on her back during the daytime, and upon which she slept at night. She had to keep this up for a whole year, after which she hung the bag with the bones to the post of her house for another year. After that period she was allowed to remarry. If she had no house of her own she hung the bones at the door of that of her next neighbor or relation. The above act was not performed if the deceased was a single man, but food was carried to his grave. The practice of scraping the bones was also performed by the Indian

[a] This author does not state where the corpse was buried in those days, but we learn from M. W. (309) that the Miskito buried their dead in their huts.

[b] *Kuala* is the Miskito name for cloth.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

woman if her husband was a buccaneer, but men were not bound to carry it out at the death of their wife. Exquemelin does not state what was done ultimately with the bones. The custom points toward the practice of endo cannibalism, which was widespread in South America, and which consisted of grinding up the bones of the deceased and consuming them in a drink. Exhumation has not been mentioned from the Mosquito Coast by subsequent travelers. 765

SUMU BURIAL CUSTOMS.—Our knowledge regarding the former burial customs of the Sumu is more rudimentary. Cremation and secondary urn burial appear to have been made use of occasionally; in the former case the ashes were placed in an earthen vessel, as did the more advanced tribes of the Pacific slope of Honduras and Nicaragua. The common people, however, were probably merely inhumed. 764

On account of the dense jungle the old burial grounds are difficult to discover. Sometimes they are indicated by low mounds which yield fragments of pottery and metates, or spindle whorls, greenstone beads, etc. A large one of these burial sites is found at the bank of Rio Punta Gorda, near its junction with Rio Pejivalle; smaller ones can be found in many other parts of the coast. In certain regions of the Atlantic slope of Honduras, apparently occupied formerly by the Paya, as at Bonito Oriental, Piedra Blanca, and Siriboya, there are high mounds surrounded by walls.

In Chontales (Nicaragua), which department was formerly occupied by the Ulwa, secondary burial was practiced; the remains were deposited upon the summit of a hill or in an artificial mound in the savanna. The spot was often marked with a cairn of loose rocks constructed in the shape of a parallelogram, varying greatly in size. The sides of these structures were either sloped or perpendicular, and the edge of the upper surface was furnished with a parapet. Fragments of rude statues placed on them have been found, and it would appear as if there were one or several large ones in the center and a small one at each corner. Boyle (a: 43–44) describes a very large cairn, measuring about 58 by 40 yards and close to 10 feet in height, which stood in the neighborhood of La Libertad on the summit of a mound 60 to 70 feet high. 765

Rogers (107) gives a short description of masks for the faces of the dead chiefs brought about 1775 from the interior of the Mosquito Coast, undoubtedly from the Sumu country. They were made of clay mixed sometimes with gold dust and were said to be the likeness of chiefs or other prominent persons who had been buried at such places. In many parts of America such face masks were used on mummies; we do not know, however, if the art of mummification was known on the Mosquito Coast. This practice had been observed by Columbus at Cariay (Atlantic coast of Costa Rica) in 1502 and was probably limited to men of rank. Rogers has de- 764 532

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

764 pictod eight of the above-named masks; most of them have their backs concaved in a cylindrical form, by which we might imagine that they were parts of sepulchral urns. (See also Roberts, pp. 299–300.)

775 CATCHING THE SOUL OF A DECEASED PERSON.—Upon the death of a person the soul (M.: *isiāni*) or "shadow," as the Creoles say, leaves the body and remains about the house. After the burial it is "caught" by the sukya and taken to the grave; otherwise it will roam about and do all sorts of mischief. This custom has been introduced among the Miskito by the West Indian Negroes; recently it has spread to the Twahka and Panamaka.

This action takes place at night by a very dim light. The task of the sukya appears to be by no means easy. Sometimes he fails to catch the soul on the first night and has to do everything over again on the following day. He throws himself into a state of ecstasy and then dances around the bed of the deceased, over which a white cotton sheet has been spread. Then he sits down in a hammock which has been slung near by and he communicates the messages received from the dead during his supernatural state. The latter might give him the names of the persons who owe him some money or have failed to return a borrowed object. If he owns some young trees, the fruits of which he has not yet tasted, he will order them cut down without any further delay. Toward daybreak, when all the people present are more or less drunk, for intoxicating beverages are served to all the guests, the sukya seizes some insect, generally a firefly or a beetle, which he pretends to be the soul of the deceased. He wraps it up quickly in the bed sheet or incloses it in a bottle and then takes it to the grave.

Some of these sorcerers are said to be able to catch the soul of Indians who have died far away from home. This is, however, a more difficult task, as the soul may keep him waiting for a whole week, until it condescends to be taken to its final resting place. Formerly the soul was supposed to enter animals or other objects belonging to the deceased, and these had to be killed or broken to drive the intruder out.

THE HEREAFTER

Both tribes believe in the immortality of the soul and its translation to a realm of happiness and bliss. Remains of this belief are seen in the burial customs, for certain objects are given to the dead which are indispensable to him during his long journey to that final resting place. Some Indians make the future existence dependent on present conduct, but this idea has undoubtedly been borrowed from Christianity. [177]

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
SA15 Mosquito SA15

846 Among some tribes, this ceremony is repeated at a later date. The *Sumo*
[504] are said to have practiced circumcision. The couvade is general.
[515] Individual names are derived from some peculiarity or mannerism. Such names were not used to address a person, especially older people.
881 **Puberty.**—Puberty ceremonies consist of tests, the details of which vary from tribe to tribe. *Sumo* boys receive serious military training at puberty.
911 Menstruating women are considered to be impure and are confined to a corner of the house (*Sumo*) or to a special hut (*Mosquito* and *Paya*). They are cleansed by bathing or, among the *Sumo*, by a steam bath.
763 **Death.**—Death is thought to be due to sorcery or to the machinations of evil spirits. People about to die are abandoned in the bush, or they may even be killed. If a person dies in a village it has to be abandoned.
764 The dead are usually buried in the dwelling, which is abandoned (*Paya*), or, among some tribes, in a special hut. The corpse is placed in a coffin made of a canoe wrapped in bark cloth. Personal belongings, food, and a dog are placed in the grave. Among the *Mosquito*, corpses were sometimes sewed in a mat and placed upright in a grave, facing the east. Slaves, servants, and sometimes a shaman were killed and buried with *Mosquito* chiefs. Early reports of the mummification of chiefs appear to
[532] be exceptional and may refer to other tribes. Clay and gold masks of chiefs are reported from one locality, probably *Sumo*.
765 The dead were mourned in many ways. The relatives cut their hair short, wept, and fasted. A mourning ritual included attempts at suicide, which friends prevented. The women sang songs in praise of the dead. Anniversary ceremonies, held at varying intervals, were intended to appease evil spirits and to aid the soul on its long journey to the hereafter.
[767] Shamans invoke the soul in order to discover who was responsible for
769 the death and to ascertain future needs. About a year after death the *Mosquito* hold an elaborate anniversary ceremony, in which face masks and other paraphernalia are employed. The *Sumo* have similar ceremonies which differ in detail. Formerly, a *Mosquito* woman exhumed the bones of her husband and carried them in a bag for a year, subsequently hanging them in the house. She might not remarry for 2 years.
[768] According to Von Hagen (1943), *Jicaque* death and burial customs are a curious mixture of Christianity and their own beliefs. After some preliminary mourning the body, clothed in the garments in which the person died, is wrapped in cloth or bark cloth and buried in the cemetery. A small wooden cross is put at the foot of the grave, and a pot through which a hole is punched is laid at the head. The cemetery is an enclosure on a hilltop, which is walled off, as are Spanish cemeteries.

WARFARE

721 Most of the information concerning warfare pertains to the *Mosquito*, who were highly organized for this purpose. Undoubtedly much of this